

Martin community counts on Small Business Saturday

Chloe Kent | Pacer Staff

As lights are hung downtown, people shop for their Thanksgiving meals and college students scramble to study for finals, there is one day that stands out for small businesses in downtown Martin, Tennessee.

Small Business Saturday encourages community members to shop small and support their favorite local stores in a big way. Vicki's Designer Touch in downtown Martin is no exception.

As soon as you enter the swanky store on South Lindell Street, you are greeted with everything Christmas, holiday cheer and many smiling faces. This small business isn't only a gift shop; they also offer floral services for any occasion, making it a one-stop shop for all gift-giving needs. Just like every other small business in Martin, Vicki White, owner of Vicki's Designer Touch, is preparing for one of the biggest holidays of the year dedicated to businesses just like hers.

"They [customers] have become more and more aware that to keep these small businesses alive in a small town, that they have to support people, and we appreciate that," White said.

Small Business Saturday is the one day that small businesses in the community see major profit. According to the U.S. Small Business Saturday Administration, the reported projected spending in the U.S. from people shopping on Small Business Saturday



Wanda Forrester of Dresden, Tenn. and Teresa VanCleave of Martin, Tenn. shop at Vicki's Designer Touch in Martin, Tenn. on Nov. 8, 2025. (Pacer Photo / Chloe Kent)

was around \$22 billion.

"It's funny that it used to be Black Friday was the busy one, they would shop online, and then they would come in and shop small business. Then Small Business Saturday just took over. It was just amazing how much our small community comes out to support us," said White.

Small businesses rely on customers shopping locally, so the business can excel above big chain stores. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce says 79% of small businesses will rely on holiday shoppers as their main profit this year, which is nine percent more than last year.

Shopping small doesn't just benefit

the business, though; it also can benefit the customer. By shopping local, you help boost the local economy. When a small business has more revenue and more business, chances are small business owners will hire employees locally, use local financial institutions and find local distributors for their products. By hiring locals to work at a small business, it keeps the same money circulating in the same town. It also helps small businesses demonstrate their commitment to the community and its growth.

Shopping at a small business can also help you get to know your fellow community members by learning their personalities, culture and even their values. It makes the shopping experience a lot more personal than shopping at a chain store.

"Shopping at a small business is more comfortable and most of the time more friendly. Big chain stores don't really care as much about individual customers," said University of Tennessee at Martin sophomore Addy Cook.

Martin has many local businesses both uptown and downtown that are relying on the community for their support, especially on Small Business Saturday. So, after you heat up those leftovers one more time, take a shopping trip downtown on Nov. 29 and support the small businesses that help make Martin the community we all enjoy.

Martin mayor, daughter, city official indicted

Bethany Collins | Pacer Staff

A Weakley County Grand Jury issued 21 indictments on Nov. 12 that exposed more than \$458,000 worth of suspicious city fund usage in Martin, Tennessee, according to the Tennessee Comptroller's report.

Mayor Randal "Randy" Brundige faces 13 felony charges, which include four counts of theft of property between \$60,000 and \$250,000, one count of theft between \$10,000 and \$60,000, seven counts of official misconduct and one count of accessory after the fact. The investigation revealed that he used his position to approve unauthorized travel expenses and approve payments tied to his daughter's payroll and related-party transactions without proper board supervision. The report claims Brundige misappropriated nearly \$11,000 of city funds by using his city-issued credit card for unauthorized travel expenses. The most severe Class B felony charges against him could result in up to 30 years of prison time for each offense.

Natalie Brundige, who works as a part-time police department custodian, faces two felony charges, which include theft of property between \$60,000 and \$250,000 and official misconduct. The

investigation revealed she received unauthorized pay and benefits totaling more than \$174,000 through her false reports of working full-time hours. Security cameras recorded her brief presence at the police department while she received full-time pay and benefits for more than six years.

The city's economic and community development director, Bradley "Brad" Thompson, faces six felony charges, which include theft of property between \$60,000 and \$250,000, four counts of official misconduct and theft between \$10,000 and \$60,000.

The report claims Thompson received improper consulting fee payments from the city, totaling more than \$235,000, and made unauthorized credit card transactions totaling at least \$33,000.

The most severe charge could result in a prison term between eight and 30 years. Tennessee law establishes felony penalties for all remaining charges.

The defendants have not filed any pleas in court as of Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025. The Weakley County Circuit Court maintains all charges as pending until a verdict is entered.

See MAYOR (pg 6) for
continued story

UT Martin impacted by AI

Ella Hasty | Pacer Staff

On Monday, Nov. 3, 2025, OpenAI, the owner of ChatGPT, and Amazon Web Services announced a \$38 billion deal between the artificial intelligence startup and the cloud infrastructure company.

This agreement could lead to improvements for ChatGPT users, such as quicker response times, fewer outages and an overall more efficient experience. The deal is an example of how artificial intelligence, or AI, continues to grow. According to the Digital Education Council, 86% of students use AI in their studies, 54% use it weekly and one in four use it daily.

At UT Martin, senior meteorology major Hayley Dorn spoke about her experiences with AI during her time in college.

"I don't really like to use it because I feel it limits critical thinking," Dorn said.

Dorn said professors encouraged her to learn to use AI because of its benefits, such as summarizing scientific research papers.

"One class says, 'It's allowed to be used for X, Y, Z,' and another class says, 'It is not permissible at all,'" Dorn said.

It can be hard to keep up with which classes allow AI, and Dorn is not the

only student who feels this way. Janna Harrod, a UT Martin freshman finance student, agrees that it is important to look at the syllabus of each class. Harrod entered college with experience using AI, as she started utilizing it her senior year of high school.

"Reflecting on myself, I feel like I don't struggle as much to try and come up with essay thoughts on my own when I know that there's something there that can just go ahead and generate them for me," Harrod said.

Dr. Adnan Rasool, director of the Center for Teaching and Learning and professor of political science, has investigated AI trends in education, especially at UT Martin. One of his main responsibilities is staying on top of trends in teaching. Rasool has found that not just at UT Martin, but across the country, the nature of students has changed.

"We used to teach a certain way about five or seven years ago. We cannot teach our students the same way because it is not the same student," he said.

Rasool conducts workshops for faculty and helps them redesign their classes or entire courses to best suit students' needs.

See AI (pg 6) for
continued story

'Twas the day before Thanksgiving...

Pete! We need to finalize the Thanksgiving seating chart and start shopping for Christmas gifts now! The overlap is insane!

Wednesday morning 7:00 am November 26, 2025

...But Paulie! It's too early...

Friday afternoon 2:45 pm November 28, 2025

Next holiday: X-mas
Previous Holiday: T-Day
Error: Too much stuffing

Pete, your food coma is over! We need to change the pumpkin spice latte into peppermint mocha!

Saturday morning 10:00 am November 29, 2025



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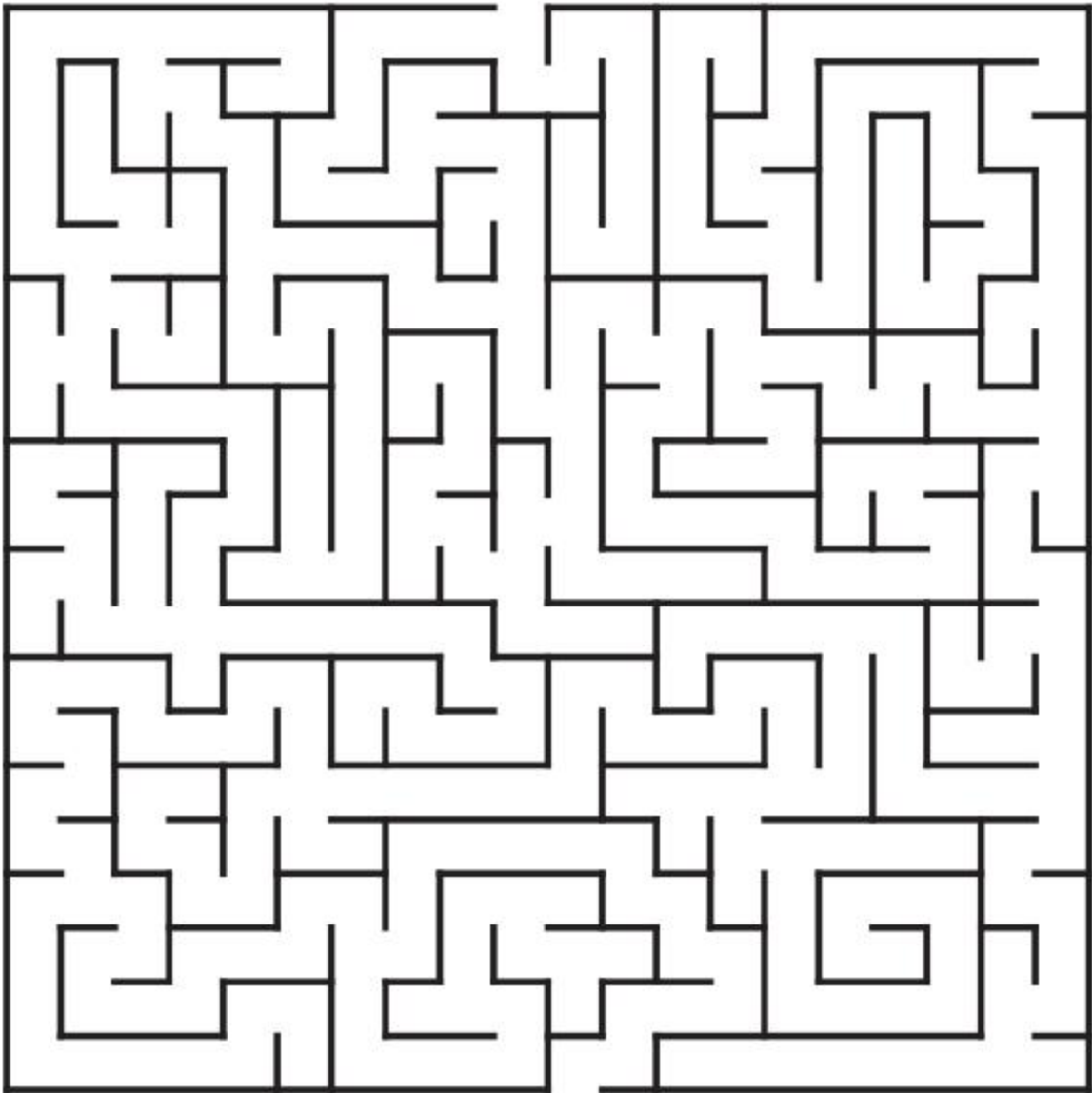
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Correction: On Oct. 31, 2025, *The Pacer* printed a story that inaccurately compared crime data from the 2025 Annual Security and Fire Safety Report with the Daily Crime and Fire Log published by UTM public safety. The story also misquoted Director Michael O'Neill. *The Pacer* deeply regrets these errors and has corrected the story on our website.

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	1	7			6
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	4		8	6	9
3			1		5
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4			2	6	7



Pacer Graphics / Aubrey Abbott & Adrianna' Carter

COOKIES & CHRISTMAS
DEC 5TH AND DEC 6TH
109 UNIVERSITY ST,
MARTIN TN



MARTIN KIWANIS CHRISTMAS
PARADE
@7PM
STARTING ON UNIVERSITY ST.-
LINDELL ST.



SANTA'S VILLAGE IN MARTIN
TN
DEC 11TH -DEC 15TH
@5PM
NED REY MCWHERTER AG
PAVILION



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
@5PM
MARTIN FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH



SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY
@8AM-8PM
106 UNIVERSITY ST MARTIN
TN.



Senior Farewell: Jerrianna ‘JJ’ Somerville

JJ Somerville | Pacer Staff

Well, folks. The time has officially come to bid my farewell—not technically, since I haven’t walked across the grand stage of the Elam Center yet. However, I digress. I am terrible at goodbyes and it doesn’t quite help that *The Pacer* has been half of my identity since the start of my freshman year. I will try to keep this as brief as possible so you, the readers, can browse the rest of our fantastic last print issue of the semester. Fair warning, though: I studied under the mentorship of Will Spencer, where word counts are non-existent.

When I arrived at the University of Tennessee at Martin in the fall of 2022, I instantly knew that I wanted to get involved in anything writing-related. I have my 10th-grade English teacher and journalism advisor, Ms. Fletcher, to thank for that. I only ever dealt with writing for my high school’s magazine and a brief stint on Wattpad, so when discovering the chaotic world that is *The Pacer*, which was led by the beloved short, long-haired, Fleetwood Mac-loving Ms. Tomi McCutchen, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I had never heard of AP Style guidelines, which is the bane of my existence—but hey, at least I knew InDesign!

During the first month of being employed here, I literally hit the ground running with whatever Ms. Tomi or the former executive editor, Kaylee Michon, assigned me to do. It wasn’t until the next semester that I would find myself in the cinematic and creative landscape that is Arts and Entertainment, led by the iconic Will Spencer. Getting to work alongside him as his assistant and learn the fundamentals of the section was truly an honor. When he graduated in 2023, I panicked. It was time for me to step into his shoes and try to fill the void he left. It was challenging at first because I didn’t see myself as a leader or a great



Jerrianna ‘JJ’ Somerville on Nov. 2, 2025. (Pacer Photo / Darby Self)

enough writer like he was. However, becoming a PEP leader during that same year taught me that leadership is not only about how well you can carry yourself professionally, but also how effectively you can connect with others and make a lasting impression.

I never saw myself as an extrovert, as I have always been shy growing up; but working at *The Pacer* and becoming a PEP leader made me the loudest person in a room. These positions brought me out of my shell and shaped me into the person I am today. The Pacer also brought a staff who became my second family. I will miss the print layout nights where the staff is fighting sleep or Adobe software. I will miss handing out newspapers at Quad City. I will miss my daily chats in the Pacer office with Aubrey as they were the highlight of my Mondays and Wednesdays, the

disorderly (I don’t know how to conduct a meeting properly) pitch meetings with my outstanding writers and the bagel sandwich that Dr. Plotner orders from Vantage.

As I wrap up my senior farewell, I would like to acknowledge and thank some people that made my time at UT Martin worthwhile. First, I would like to thank my family for their love and support. There were times that I wanted to give up and go live in a RV, but their FaceTime calls and visits kept me going.

Dr. Nanney and Mr. Freed, thank you for guiding and advising me throughout my three years here. I wouldn’t be graduating this soon if it wasn’t for you two—teaching me how to navigate the confusing concept that is a flight plan.

To all of my GENS students and

the First Year Experience Program, it was an honor to be your PEP leader, and I would like to thank the Mass Media and Strategic Communication department for trusting me to fulfill the role for almost three years. Meeting and connecting with you all brought so much joy to my life. I am so proud of the young adults you have grown to become. Continue to soar and make your mark on not only this campus, but in the world.

Dr. Plotner, although this is your first semester with *The Pacer* and I was highly intimidated by you at the start, you took a chance on the staff and shaped us for the better. I admire your drive and resilience; I wish I had half of that! I can’t wait to see what else you have in store for *The Pacer* as it is in good hands. Adrianna’, my Alpha Kappa Psi forever brother and one of my best friends, I loved working alongside you and growing such a strong bond within shared interests. Continue to accomplish your dreams and never doubt yourself and your capabilities!

My daughter, Paulena, who may not be here physically yet, but her karate kicks say otherwise! I hope that one day you think your mama is cool.

Last but certainly not least, Ms. Tomi, or as I like to call her, “Tomika”, thank you for seeing something in me. Thank you for showing me that my voice does matter. Your guidance, endless support and love made me a better writer. All of the years and sacrifice you put into *The Pacer* to make it worth something never went unnoticed. You are the heart and soul of *The Pacer*, along with the incredible staff.

If I haven’t said anything of value yet, then I would like to leave with this: to any student or person reading, never be afraid to be yourself, unapologetically. Chase your wildest dreams, but don’t lose sight of who you are as a person. Holla!

Behold! Local store brings creativity to community

Bryant Steele | Pacer Staff

Since the closure of GameStop in Union City earlier this year, there has been no place for UT Martin students to go for collectible or gaming purposes. Unless they have tried their luck at local retailers like Walmart. There are no stores within an hour of campus. This was the case until seven weeks ago, when the go-to destination

for collectors and gamers alike opened its doors.

Retro Retreat specializes in video games, Funko Pops, trading cards, comic books and more. Daniel Schaeffer II, a UT Martin alumnus and the sole proprietor of Retro Retreat, usually runs the shop from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the week. If anything changes, the hours are updated on the store’s Instagram page (@the.retro.

retreat.1999). Retro Retreat is located at 118 Hurt St. in Martin, TN.

When asked what customers can expect from the store, Schaeffer said, “It’s in the slogan. ‘Let us help you level up your collection.’”

The store has a very cozy energy to it. It’s minimalist in design, but as you look around, you can tell that there is more than meets the eye. The work that Schaeffer put into creating this

spacious design—which feels genuine and welcoming—was well worth the payoff. The retro consoles and video games are in good condition and well-priced for what they are.

See RETRO (pg 6) for continued story



Retro Retreat owner Daniel Schaeffer counting Pokémon cards on Nov. 14, 2025. (Pacer Photo / Bryant Steele)



UPCOMING 2026 FILMS

- SEND HELP - JAN. 2
- SCREAM 7 - FEB. 27
- REMINDERS OF HIM - MAR. 13
- THE SUPER MARIO GALAXY MOVIE - APR. 3
- MICHAEL - APR. 24
- THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA 2 - MAY. 1
- MORTAL KOMBAT II - MAY. 15
- SCARY MOVIE 6 - JUN. 12

(Pacer Graphic / JJ Somerville)



UT Martin alumni land on big screen

Marques Rice | Pacer Staff

After graduation, many students look forward to going into the work field or taking a break before getting a master's degree; Blake and Bryce Holliman went to compete for almost \$5 million. The Hollimans are originally from Greenfield, Tennessee, about 20 minutes away from Martin and home to a little over 2000 people. As they began to describe their experiences at The University of Tennessee at Martin, Bryce said, "Our first two years of college, we did absolutely nothing. We only spent time with each other and a small number of friends we met along the way."

However, during their last two years of college, they wanted to get involved and do as much around campus as possible. They would both get involved in various leadership roles. "We are big introverts; we really did not like talking to people. But we knew that we would have to learn how to for our everyday lives. We used our leadership roles to build up those characteristics, and that allowed us to become more open to conversation," said Bryce.

Both Hollimans crossed the stage back in May 2025, but by this time, they had already known what the future had in place for them. "The week of graduation is when we found out we were on the show," said Blake. "I remember getting ready for [graduation] practice, and then I saw we had gotten a call from one of the ladies we had been talking to during the process."

The twins were ecstatic; they did not know how to express or explain what news they had been told. Blake said, "She had called me to say that we both had made it. I immediately started screaming; I was excited and so happy. It all just felt so surreal. We could not believe that people from the middle of nowhere, Tennessee, got cast on a show."

Blake explained the process of applying for the show. He was sitting at his job in the Student Life Center,

and he came across an ad for the show asking for applicants. His coworker left to go on break, and he figured that he would take that hour to apply. He would finish up his application and not think anything of it until the next day, when he would get a call from a number based in the United Kingdom. He conducted his phone interview with a lady and recommended for his twin to get a place on the show too.

After getting their message back, they quickly scrambled to prepare for filming, which would be taking place in a few months. "I love the show and watched all of the first season. So I had an idea in my head of what to expect; however, Bryce [had] never watched it, so I made him watch it to get an understanding of how everything worked," said Blake.

Even though they understood how the show worked, it would be a completely different experience once they actually went to the filming site. Blake said, "The time change was something that really affected us both. Once we got off the plane, we were both extremely tired, but over there, it was still the middle of the day. They had people ready to pick us up from the airport, and we rode through London. It was our first time being there and we loved it, besides the food, which was different from what we have in Tennessee."

He went on to explain the process of getting the cast photos taken and preparing for the first day of filming. The time difference was a major factor for both of them; they struggled with sleep since nighttime in London is close to midday in the US. A lot of the nights on set were spent watching TV until the morning of filming.

While the actual set experience was completely different, Bryce said, "The production team had snacks for everyone. They also made sure to check on everyone, even though there were over 400 people on set at any given time... We also made friends during the filming of the show. Since we were the babies of the show, many people

would look out for us and check on us to make sure we were okay."

Bryce talked about their final moments on the show. "We made it past the first game, but once we got back into the dorms, we were hand-selected by another group to be voted out. We were only there for a week, but the experience was completely worth it." He continued, "It was so much fun. Of course, we wanted to win, but we made it past the first game and had a memorable elimination. Most people do not get any designated screen time, but we got our own moment to shine."

Assistant Director of Campus Event Service & University Center Lindee McCurley and a close friend of both Blake and Bryce, reflected on getting to know them. "They were fantastic employees in our office during their time as students here, and they hold a particularly special place in my heart because I'm also a twin. We'd often bond over 'twin things'—the assumptions people make, the quirks, and the unique experiences that only twins understand," said McCurley.

She mentioned how important it is to her to keep up with students and their future endeavors, especially when it comes to what they do after graduating from the university.

She talked about how excited she is to watch them on Netflix. She said, "With a new 3 12-month-old at home, I haven't had the chance to actually sit down and watch yet, but it's at the top of my Netflix list for the next holiday break. So far, I've only caught the screenshots they've shared, and it's hilarious how I can practically hear their voices when I see them talking. I find myself thinking, 'Oh, I've seen those faces before...'"

The twins finished with words of encouragement for people who are looking to pursue their own dreams. "Always be yourself," they said. "That is the biggest thing. You do not want to fake your personality; once you start acting differently, people will see that and realize you are not that same person anymore."



(Pacer Graphic / Darby Self)

'Newsies' seizes the day

Ethan Tanner | Pacer Staff

The Bethel University Renaissance performed its blockbusting production of Newsies: The Musical from Saturday, Nov. 1-8 at the Dixie Carter Performing Arts Center in Huntingdon.

After five strenuous months of rehearsing complex songs and difficult choreographies, the performers put on a show that was nothing short of impressive in all artistic categories.

Director Aubrey Doyle was happy the department ended up producing the show, even though she had some doubts at first.

The production was a theatrical adaptation of the 1992 Disney movie of the same name written by Bob Tzudiker and Noni White, which was in turn based loosely off of the New York City newsboys' strike of 1899.

"Newsies was a show for me that was kind of a bucket list show and something that I've always wanted to do, but we didn't have very many boys to be in it. So I was like, well, we don't, but the girls actually were the ones that convinced me to do it," Doyle said.

The story mainly focuses around newsy Jack Kelly, portrayed by junior Bethel University music production major Cooper Neely of Milan. Jack is a poor yet talented young man who aspires to leave New York and move out west to Santa Fe with his disabled, close friend Crutchie (Bailey Hudson).

When all the newspapers in town raise the price of a stack of newspapers to 50 cents to 60 cents, Jack and the newsies are outraged at how this change will only make it more difficult for them to earn money. Thanks to an idea by Katharine "Plumber" (Allie Inman), the newsies go on strike and fight to earn their proper wages in a chaotic yet fun sequence of events.

See NEWSIES (pg 6) for continued story.



Manga suggestion: 'Sanda'

Laur Davis | Pacer Staff

Sanda is a manga illustrated by Paru Itagaki, initially released on Dec. 8, 2021. Itagaki is most popular for her work with Beastars—and her unique art style certainly carries over in this interesting new story. There has also been an anime adaptation released on Oct. 3, 2025, which continues to have episodes released.

The story follows middle school student Kazushige Sanda through a normal school day in the winter of a close-future Japan, with a ban on Christmas in the background. He is confronted by a girl named Shiori Fuyumura, who is on a bloodlust mission to kill him, all in an effort to get him to wear red.

Upon being stabbed and, on a technicality, wearing red, Sanda transforms into a Santa Claus-like figure. His life is turned upside down when he realizes that he is related to the Santa Claus bloodline in a society that has banned Christmas.

He is tasked with helping Fuyumura find her missing friend while also

navigating society with this power.

Sanda is an interesting protagonist to follow, but I am unsure how I really feel about him.

The only thing I have any issues with is the buff Santa Claus transformation. It feels really awkward in the moment, and the design is questionable at best. The manga itself is not bad, but questionable.

I am not sure what kind of people I would recommend this to, but I'm sure it will touch some hearts.

The manga is certainly interesting and suitable for the upcoming Christmas season. If you are looking for something on the more unusual side, I highly suggest this.

There have been online reviews calling this show "idiotic," but that does not mean it is not worth taking a look at.

There are online sources you can use to read the manga, but there is no promise that you will not be dodging ads. These websites are nice to use if you can not afford to buy the physical copies and want to read it for yourself.



Finals week shouldn't feel like survival mode

Bethany Collins | Pacer Staff

Finals week looks the same every year.

There are students asleep on couches in the UC, half-finished projects open on laptops, group chats buzzing with “did anyone start this yet,” and someone crying quietly in a bathroom stall. We trade stories about how little we have slept and how many energy drinks we have had, like it is some kind of competition.

Somehow, we have accepted that this is normal.

Finals week should not feel like survival mode. It should not be the week that pushes students from “stressed” into “barely functioning.” If college is supposed to be about learning, growth and preparation for the “real world,” then the way we handle the end of the semester sends the wrong message.

Part of the problem is how everything is scheduled. Professors assign big projects, presentations and papers throughout the semester. Many of them still land in the same two-week window at the end. Add in review assignments, participation makeups and cumulative exams—suddenly every class feels like the most important thing in your life on the same exact days.

It is not that students do not want to work hard. Most of us already are. Many students work jobs, participate in extracurriculars, are athletes and/or have family responsibilities on top

of classes. The issue is that no one can give their best work to four or five classes when everything is due at once. Finals end up measuring who can stay awake the longest, not who actually understands the material.

There is also a culture problem.

We treat suffering as proof that we care.

We joke about “living in the library” and “running on three hours of sleep.” We post late-night study selfies like war badges. When someone says they are overwhelmed, the response is often “same” and a laugh; not “maybe this is too much.”

Sometimes, the way we talk about the “real world” makes it worse. Students hear things like “this is just how college is,” or “you will not get extensions at your job,” or “this is what separates the serious students.” It frames exhaustion as a character test instead of a warning sign.

But burnout is not a personality trait. It is a health issue.

Sleep deprivation makes it harder to focus, remember information and think clearly. Anxiety and depression often spike right when finals hit. Telling students to power through and “grind” ignores what the research and our own bodies are already telling us.

On top of that, mental health support usually does not match the level of stress. Counseling centers fill up quickly as the semester gets busier. Some students can not get appointments until after

finals are already over. Others do not even try, because they know they barely have time to sleep, let alone sit in an office and unpack everything they are feeling.

You can not meditate your way out of having three exams and two major projects in the same week. Self care does not mean much if you never have time to actually do it.

If colleges truly care about student wellness and meaningful learning, then something has to change. Finals week does not have to be easy, but it should at least be humane.

There are real, practical steps that could help:

Professors and departments could coordinate major deadlines so that every big paper does not land in the same five-day stretch. A shared calendar, even just within a department, would make a difference.

Classes could rethink what a final looks like. Not every course needs one giant, high-stakes exam. Portfolios, presentations, reflective essays or expanded versions of earlier work can all show what students have learned without forcing everything into one test period.

Schools could adopt a guideline that no new major assignments are introduced in the last week of regular classes. That time could be used for review, questions and catching up, instead of overwhelming students with brand-new expectations.

Mental health services could extend hours and offer more walk-in slots during peak stress weeks. At the same time, professors could build small amounts of flexibility into their classes, such as dropping a student’s lowest quiz grade or offering reasonable extensions in documented cases.

None of these ideas lower academic standards. In fact, they would probably improve them. It is hard to show deep, thoughtful work when your brain is running on caffeine and panic.

Finals week will probably never be relaxing. Grades are on the line, the semester is ending and everyone is tired. Some level of stress is unavoidable.

But there is a difference between being challenged and being crushed.

The end of the semester should feel like a finish line, not a wall. It should be a chance to show what you learned, not a test of how little you can sleep and still function. Students should not have to sacrifice their health to prove they take their education seriously.

A more humane academic culture, with realistic deadlines, coordinated schedules and genuine mental health support, would not only help students. It would help faculty too, because burned-out students are not at their best in anyone’s classroom.

Finals week should not feel like survival mode. It should feel like what it was meant to be all along: the closing chapter of a semester of learning, not the breaking point.

Editorial: Martin deserves answers and accountability

Pacer Editorial Staff

When a small town hears the words “grand jury,” “indictments,” and “misused taxpayer money,” it shakes the community in a way big-city scandals rarely do.

This is not a far-off headline from Washington D.C. or Nashville; this is home. And now Martin, Tennessee, is facing one of the most serious public-trust crises in its modern history.

Mayor Randal “Randy” Brundige, his daughter, Natalie Brundige and Economic and Community Development Director Bradley “Brad” Thompson have been indicted on a combined 21 felony charges tied to more than \$458,000 in questionable or misused city funds, according to the Tennessee Comptroller.

These allegations are not clerical errors. Not misunderstandings. Not “oops, the math was wrong.”

They involve improper consulting fees, unauthorized travel charges, full-time pay for part-time work and a mayor allegedly approving payments for his daughter and for a company tied directly to his own staff member—without the oversight required by law.

If proven true in court, this is not just mismanagement. It is a breach of trust against every taxpayer in Martin.

Since the indictments were made public, only one city official has made public comment and that is Alderman Jacob Crowe.

He posted on his official Facebook writing, “As soon as these indictments came to light, I began working every possible channel to move our city toward accountability and healing. We cannot move forward while leadership

remains under such a cloud.” He also wrote, “Mayor Brundige and Brad Thompson should not still be in their positions and they should not be in office. Their decisions have left a wound that we must now work together to heal.”

Leadership is not measured on sunny days. It is measured in the middle of a storm, when transparency is most critical. This is what happens when a mayor has been in unchecked power for over 20 years.

The three defendants are scheduled to appear in Weakley County Circuit Court at 9 a.m. on Monday, Nov. 24, for their initial court proceedings. The next day, on Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 5:15 p.m., the Board of Mayor and Aldermen will hold a special-called meeting in the city courtroom.

On that agenda: a request for the resignations of Mayor Brundige and Thompson and time set aside for public comment.

This is more than a calendar note. It is a test of the board’s willingness to confront the allegations in public and of residents’ willingness to show up, ask questions and demand accountability. If you pay taxes in Martin, or if you care about how your money is used, that meeting is for you.

The Tennessee Comptroller’s report outlines years of weak financial controls, many of which were already identified in 2021 and never corrected.

Among them:

- No clear oversight on travel spending
- No formal credit card policy
- No requirement for signed timesheets
- No consistent approval process for contracts
- No written reimbursement rules
- No tagged inventory of certain city-

owned technology

These are not sophisticated policies; they are basics. And the fact that they were ignored for years reveals a city government that assumed no one was watching, or worse, that no one would ever care.

Because this money did not appear out of thin air.

It came from property taxes, sales taxes and utility payments from the pockets of residents who expect, at minimum, a functioning and honest local government.

When taxpayer money is used for beachfront condos, personal business contracts, repeated premium travel or salaries not earned, it is not just a violation of law. It is a violation of trust.

Regardless of how the criminal cases unfold—and all three defendants are, as the law requires, presumed innocent—the city government still has a responsibility to its citizens right now. That responsibility includes:

Immediate transparency measures
Implementing the Comptroller’s recommendations should not be optional. It should be the bare minimum—clear policies on travel, credit cards, contracts, payroll and reporting to the board.

A plan to restore public trust

Trust lost in government is extremely difficult to regain. The city must show thorough action, not silence, that this will not happen again. That includes honest discussion at meetings, not trying to pretend that nothing is wrong. Local government is supposed to be the closest, most accessible and trustworthy level of democracy. When that trust breaks, the damage is profound—but it can be repaired.

That repair will not come from press

releases or courtroom whispers. It will come from residents who read the report, show up to meetings, ask hard questions and refuse to let this moment fade quietly into the background..

Martin deserves absolute honesty. Martin deserves accountability. Martin deserves a city government that respects the people who fund it.

On Nov. 25, the microphones in the city courtroom will be on. The question is: will we use them?





MAYOR from page 1

The city has not released any official statements. The Board of Mayor and Aldermen conducted its meeting on Monday, Nov. 10, but did not discuss the indictments—even though the mayor was not present.

The Comptroller’s Office identified major internal control problems that led to extended periods of unauthorized payments and recommended various corrective measures. The Comptroller’s Office recommends that the city implement better credit

card monitoring, require employees to submit timesheets, create written reimbursement rules and enhance all purchase and travel approval processes.

The court will schedule arraignments for all three defendants in the upcoming weeks. The 27th Judicial District will handle the prosecution of these cases, which will likely go to trial during the following year if the defendants choose to fight their charges. The Comptroller’s Office required the city to create major policy changes to stop future cases of taxpayer fund misuse. The 2021 audit

report revealed multiple problems that matched the current investigation, creating additional doubts about city government oversight.

As of Nov. 16, only one member of the City of Martin Board of Mayor and Aldermen has made an official comment. Alderman Jacob Crowe posted on his Facebook saying, “As soon as these indictments came to light, I began working every possible channel to move our city toward accountability and healing. We cannot move forward while leadership remains

under such a cloud. Mayor Brundige and Brad Thompson should not still be in their positions and they should not be in office. Their decisions have left a wound that we must now work together to heal.”

The City of Martin Board of Mayor and Aldermen has called a special meeting for Nov. 25 at 5:15 p.m. at the city courtroom in the Martin police department on North Lindell St. The Board is requesting Mayor Randy Brundige’s resignation and assessing the employment of Brad Thompson.

AI from page 1

Through his research and experience as a professor, he has noticed a trend among students who are getting hurt by using AI in the wrong ways. Rasool explained that students who are at a C or D level—who in the past could have been boosted up a letter grade—are the ones who get hurt most by misusing AI.

“The kid who could have been a solid C is now inching toward a D because their level of effort has gone down to a point where I can’t do anything for them,” Rasool said.

When students copy and paste AI’s work, they don’t realize the quality of what they submit is extremely low, Rasool said. Students do not understand how effective AI can be for them, and he believes it will take a couple of years for students to begin to

grasp that.

Rasool also spoke about the variety of AI tools available for students and staff to use.

“I would like nothing more than for our students to understand which tool at what time,” Rasool said.

Chancellor Yancy Freeman has been progressive about giving faculty access to advanced AI tools. All university faculty and staff have access to Gemini Pro, the full version of the AI program

created by Google DeepMind.

When looking to the future of AI, Rasool said the ones who will be hurt the hardest are generalists.

“It’s not going to essentially replace people,” he said. “What’s going to happen is we’re going to require a lot less people to do these things.”

Rasool said it is important for students to specialize and think about the future of their desired profession as AI continues to grow.

RETRO from page 3

The comics are either lined up neatly in glass cases or stacked on a shelf and put on display. According to Schaeffer, the merchandise is ever-changing. The store receives new products every week, some of them even coming from Schaeffer’s own personal collection.

At the heart of Retro Retreat is Daniel Schaeffer’s personal story. His love and passion for collecting items, specifically Pokémon cards, as a child led him to where he is now. He was able to turn

his hobby into a business, making his dream come true. Schaeffer speaks with everyone who walks into the store; his friendly demeanor ensures customers that they have come to the right place. He’s making it possible for students to level up their collection without having to travel far. Schaeffer’s story is an inspiration to all young enthusiasts. No matter what you’re passionate about, as long as you put in the effort to make it come true, then it will.

Schaeffer mentioned that he wants to hold Super Smash Bros. tournaments from time to time. He also spoke on

expanding the store’s trading card collection. It was identified as Retro Retreat’s specialty and a division of focus for Schaeffer. Card games such as Magic: The Gathering, Yu-Gi-Oh and, of course, Pokémon can be expected to grow in number soon at Retro Retreat. By expanding the merchandise like this, Retro Retreat will likely bring in more customers who are members of those fandoms.

When asked what it feels like to finally have a store such as this in Martin, customer Wes Tyson said, “It’s awesome. I’ve been waiting for this for

a long time, actually.”

Speaking on returning to Retro Retreat anytime soon, another customer, Cedric Jones, replied, “Today definitely. Be it the Lord’s will.”

With an already growing fanbase and an ever-expanding collection, Retro Retreat is proving itself to be a competent business on the market. Schaeffer’s passion for his hobbies led him to support the former university that he once called home. From now on, the go-to destination for collectibles and video games in the Martin area will be the domain known as Retro Retreat.

NEWSIES from page 4

The musical’s premise makes an entertaining watch as it displays what life was like for poor, rural youth who struggled to make themselves a living without a proper family or home. Every actor emulated this environment by dressed up in ragged, old-fashioned clothing and spoke in strong New York accents. It really shed light on this fascinating turn of the century, which even included prominent historical figures such as New York World editor Joseph Pulitzer (Kaleb Porter) and Governor Theodore Roosevelt (Bala Boyd).

One of the show’s most versatile performers was the lead, Cooper Neely. Neely demonstrated his ability to have chemistry with each of his fellow cast members, which made all of the interactions feel fun and lively. Whether he acted like a loving, protective big brother to Bailey Hudson’s Crutchie, or argued and made amends with Nathan Salvador’s Davey, Neely perfectly portrayed the mischievous, ambitious leader Jack Kelly was meant to be.

His greatest strengths as a performer were also shown through his renditions of Santa Fe and its reprise. With eyes of emotion and sorrow, he sang each verse of the song with a stunning projection and timbre that portrayed his longing and put us in his character’s shoes, as we imagined his dreams to leave the city and move out west away from his struggles.

Neely was very excited to be a part of this performance, since he had

originally auditioned for the Bethel University Renaissance Theatre with Santa Fe.

“This is a really full circle moment for me. So this is my dream show, my dream role. I did a whole bunch of stuff. I’ve just tried to develop myself a whole lot. And I got a lot of inspiration from actors like Jeremy Jordan and just so many other people,” Neely said.

The musical numbers provided both visual spectacle and vocal expertise to awe the audience’s senses. As an ensemble-focused production, there were plenty of group numbers with all the different newsies spread to different parts of the stage, who sang and took part in different activities. Everybody on stage felt like a developed, unique character, whether it was the cigar-loving, snarky Race (Grace Barber) or the egotistical, womanizing Romeo (Townes Boyd), the large cast helped every scene and musical number feel energetic and alive.

In these big ensemble numbers such as Seize the Day and Carrying the Banner, there would usually be exciting segments near the end of each number where all the cast members would join in the center of the stage and dance together as they shouted the chorus. There were also some segments where some specific cast members would steal the spotlight temporarily by jumping or somersaulting, which always resulted in “whoops” and hollers from the audience.

The set designed by Bala Boyd left little to the imagination. Ornate wooden constructions of buildings and balconies covered the stage and

established the settings for each scene. They were built with impressive amounts of care and detail, yet were able to fit all the different settings that took place throughout the play. There were also motorized parts of the set that moved up and down during the play, such as a pair of banners that Kelly painted for Medda Larkin’s theatre.

One of the play’s most unique assets on stage was a large projector that was used as a backdrop to exhibit the different settings like the time of day. It was especially creative when used for interactive scenes such as when the headline was announced, where it was written across the screen, or the musical number I Never Planned on You, where we see each stroke of Jack’s pencil projected above in a beautiful animation that sketches a likeness of Katharine.

The production was a smashing success and brought in plenty of audiences from around the region. While the audience did definitely enjoy the show, the cast may have enjoyed it even more.

Allie Inman, a junior Sociology major from Medina who portrayed Katherine, was well-received for her performance and enjoyed the long process of rehearsals and performance after performance in the Newsies.

“It wouldn’t be the same without all of my amazing co-stars. It really is all of my best friends are in this show and we just get to laugh together, have fun together throughout the entire process. It reminds me how lucky I am to be in a program like this with so many amazing talented people,” she said.

The Bethel University Renaissance has planned many events for the spring 2026 semester, including a production of Clue: On-stage and a Broadway Revue, of which UT Martin students are encouraged to check out to have a splendid experience.

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Senior Farewell: Connor Butts

Connor Butts | Pacer Staff

When I first came to UT Martin, I had no clue what I really wanted to do.

I knew I wanted to do something in sports. When I was a freshman, I started out with a focus in broadcasting. At the time, I had no interest in writing due to some rather annoying interactions and papers I had to write in high school. Little did I know how different that really was from journalistic writing.

I am not big on writing about myself. I prefer to write about something or someone, preferably sports related.

A big thanks to Ms. Tomi McCutchen for where I am today. As mentioned, I came to UT Martin unsure of what I was going to do, but Ms. Tomi pushed me in the right direction and threw me straight into the fire, naming me sports editor right away in the fall of my sophomore year when I switched to a focus in journalism. I had little to no experience writing as a journalist, let alone being named to this big of a role. I cannot say I regret it or can be mad at her, though, as it has impacted how I write and who I am today.

Ms. Tomi took a flier on a guy with no writing experience, at least professionally, who simply loved the Chicago Bears. If she had not pushed me to where I am today, I doubt I would have found my connections in the NFL. I doubt I would have applied to and gone to the 2024 NFL London games or met some great friends I have



Connor Butts on Nov. 17, 2025. (Pacer Photo / Chloe Kent)

today. Speaking of those friends, I want to point toward fellow sports editor Nate Szarzynski and executive editor Chyler Lee.

Nate is a Chicagoan through and through - sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. I met Nate through the simple enjoyment of Chicago sports, football to be exact. Little did I know the random guy in

a Pittsburgh Steelers Mitch Trubisky jersey would become one of my close friends. He calls me out when I say stupid things and when I make mistakes, for the better. Nate has helped me mold my common sense and critical thinking skills, or at least the little bit I have. He has pushed me to expand my sports knowledge and my journalism skills.

Chyler, on the other hand, came in later than Nate but has been one of my biggest supporters when it comes to my work. I first met Chyler thanks to Ms. Tomi's recruitment skills, and once I learned he was not a fan of the Green Bay Packers but instead the Tennessee Titans, I knew he was going to be a good and close friend. Chyler will stay up until 4 a.m., even when you tell him to get some sleep, but he makes sure your articles get edited. Chyler will congratulate you and tell you when you did well on an article while still holding you to *The Pacer* standard.

I feel like this semester I have seen a big jump in not only the amount of work I have put out but the quality of work. Kudos again to Nate and Chyler for pushing me in that department, but I also want to highlight our new advisor, Professor Kayli Plotner.

Dr. Plotner has come in and not only pushed our staff to the best of our abilities but also taught us more about how to write as journalists, especially in AP style. In a short time, Plotner has allowed me to show off my work more and pushed me to be a better editor and writer.

UT Martin, it was fun, but man, I am tired of school and glad it is over. I will never forget the impact *The Pacer* had on me, not only for my future in journalism and media but for who I am as a person.

Always and forever, Bear Down.

UTM Basketball: 6 Players to Watch

Will Stevens | Pacer Staff

As both the men's and women's UT Martin Skyhawks basketball seasons have returned, the men have started hot while the women have had early struggles.

The men's team has started 3-1 with big road wins against the UNLV Runnin' Rebels and Bradley Braves, while the women's team have started 1-2 with a win against the Fisk Bulldogs and losses against the North Alabama Lions and Tennessee Lady Volunteers.

With the arrival of both seasons, here are three players from each team to keep an eye on the rest of the way.

Andrija Bukumirović is a 6-foot-7-inch, 20-year-old junior guard/forward from Sjenica, Serbia. Before he came to UT Martin Bukumirović played for the Eastern Florida State Titans under UT Martin head coach Jeremy Shulman.

Dragos Lungu is a 6-foot-6-inch, 21-year-old redshirt sophomore guard from Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He played 37 games for the San Diego Toreros in two seasons.

Lamine Niang is a 6-foot-9-inch, 23-year-old redshirt junior forward from Thiès, Senegal. He spent two seasons with the Cal State Northridge Matadors, where he played in 18 games as a true freshman.

Grace Billington is a 5-foot-10-inch, 19-year-old guard from Moberly, Missouri. She spent her freshman year at Murray State where as a true freshman found herself playing time in 14 games.

Kenley McCarn is a 5-foot-11-inch, 22-year-old guard from Melbourne, Arkansas. Currently, McCarn leads the team in scoring and minutes with averages 15 points per game and nearly 69 minutes played.

Norah Clark is a 6-foot-1-inch, 21-year-old forward from Springfield, Missouri. She attended Nixa High School where she averaged 16.9 points, 3.7 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game. Clark was the only UT Martin women's player to make the OVC Women's basketball watch list.

ANDRIJA from 8

In his short career of organized basketball, Bukumirović has been mentored by two people, most recently being Shulman.

"I been here for three years, of course, and he changed my game," Bukumirović said. "[He] teach me some fundamental things that I didn't know I lacked."

However, the coach that impacted him most was his first.

In his hometown, Bukumirović had someone see potential in him — and Coach Momir Ratković.

"[He] saw potential in me, he took me, and he was like, 'Kid, I'm gonna make of you a player, but you just need to know that... you don't know how to play basketball. I need to teach you everything,'" Bukumirović said. "Honestly, I think, if I didn't have that coach, I would probably never play basketball. If he didn't teach me [the] things he taught me."

Bukumirović has made many strides to get where he is today, but one of the biggest factors to his success this season had nothing to do with drills or changes in technique; it was another, less tangible thing.

"I think I just got more confident. I figured out what my role is and I'm just taking shots confidently. Nothing in my style of play [has] changed," Bukumirović said. "I'm still playing the same game I did last year. Just, this year, I'm confident. I don't pass out on open shots or anything. I'm just playing the game."

In day-to-day life, Bukumirović says things aren't much different from home. His hometown and

Martin have similar population sizes — 10,825 for Martin and 14,060 for Sjenica. The biggest difference, Bukumirović says, is the behavior.

"People here in the USA are, really — I always say really welcoming. Like, maybe sometimes too much. They always happy, always smile, always ready to help you with some things," he said. "And in Europe, people are more like, 'Okay, I help you one time, I help you two times. You cannot fool me three times.'"

Off the court, Bukumirović says he doesn't mind living in a small town like Martin, especially since it's similar in size to the town he grew up in. It only amplifies his energy off the court as well.

"Just an amazing human," Shulman described Bukumirović as. "He's just got this likability about him. He's always smiling. He just gives great energy... He lights up every room that he's in."

However, every success story doesn't come without its struggles. Early in the offseason, coaches noted that Bukumirović had taken a step back in terms of practice. He needed to get back on the right path in order to succeed, and Shulman was sure to pave that path for him.

"I thought he relaxed for the first time and we called him out on it," Shulman said. "And I told Andrija, I said, 'I gotta — I gotta be a truth teller, you know. Right now, you would not be in our top 12 rotation.'"

The statement brought tears Bukumirović's eyes, but has led to the best start of his career.

"I tell him how proud—That's literally a word that I use for him...He's just so unselfish. He's all about the team," Shulman said. "It's hard to separate the best days from the good days because every day is a good day for him."

UT Martin Mens Basketball Schedule

Nov 22: vs Prairie View	Dec 18: vs TN State
Nov 25: vs Berscia	Dec 20: vs Tennessee Tech
Dec 2: vs Charleston Southern	Jan 1: vs Western IL
Dec 7: vs Alabama State	Jan 3: vs Eastern IL
Dec 10: vs SIU	Jan 8: vs Moorhead State
Dec 14: vs Champion Chris	

UT Martin Womens Basketball Schedule

Nov 22: vs UTEP Miners	Dec 18: vs TN State
Nov 30: vs Oakwood	Dec 20: vs Tennessee Tech
Dec 4: vs Lipscomb	Jan 1: vs Western IL
Dec 6: vs Arkansas State	Jan 3: vs Eastern IL
Dec 14: vs Champion Chris	Jan 8: vs Moorhead State

Bukumirović leads Skyhawks in stats, character

Chyler Lee | Pacer Staff

The UT Martin Skyhawks basketball team has opened the season 3-0 for the first time since 2020 and just the second time since 1989. A major factor in their success is the leap that junior forward Andrija Bukumirović has taken so far.

"This is nothing unexpected for us. We [were] ready for this kind of start," Bukumirović said. "We came here, ready to play, and we know we can win all these games."

A 20-year-old from Sjenica, Serbia, Bukumirović has been the Skyhawks' best player and has been with head coach Jeremy Shulman for the longest of any players on the team (along with point guard Afan Trnka).

Bukumirović has played organized basketball for just five years, only playing for two years before joining Shulman at junior college (JUCO) Eastern Florida State College and then eventually following him to Martin.

"He just wants to get better all the time," Shulman said. "He's a sponge for knowledge. He just works his tail off. He invests in on-the-court work, in the film room, in the weight room. He's just a nonstop worker."

Now, after averaging six points and five rebounds last year, Bukumirović has led the Skyhawks in points (20.0) and rebounds (6.7) through three games.

In the bigger picture, Bukumirović has improved every single one of his averages compared to last season, including his 3-point percentage (29.7% to 69.7%) and his steals (0.4



Junior forward Andrija Bukumirović (#0) shoots a three-pointer from the left corner against the Bradley Bruins in Renaissance Coliseum on Nov. 12, 2025. (UTM Athletics)

per game to 1.7 per game). It's a start so good that even his coach could not have predicted it.

"Honestly, his performance in the game so far has been incredible. I wouldn't say there's even a moment that would have tipped us off on that," Shulman said. "He just does what he does. He tries to make the right basketball play every possession. Whether it's an offensive rebound, a cut, defensive, knocking down a shot, dunking, whatever it is, he's so

unselfish."

It's a sentiment that Bukumirović seems to echo himself: an attitude of making the right play over stats. Even in a hypothetical situation, he wanted to make the right play.

When asked what his go-to move to score would be, his answer was, interestingly, "offensive rebound."

"My go-to move is open shots. If my teammate find me — I'm an assistant player, I'm a good team

player," Bukumirović said. "I'm not going to take a ball and go tween, tween, cross, behind. No, I'm just going to [take] what I get."

Bukumirović has modeled his game after NBA players such as Christian Braun and Dalton Knecht, but his favorite player of all time is Michael Jordan.

See ANDRIJA (pg 7) for continued story.

Pat Summitt and Bettye Giles' impact on Women's Athletics

Connor Butts | Pacer Staff

On Nov. 9, 2025, the UT Martin Lady Skyhawks and Tennessee Lady Volunteers played in the Pat Summitt Heritage Classic 2025.

This marked the first time the event had been held at UT Martin since the event's debut in 1997.

UT Martin women's basketball head coach Kevin McMillan spoke on what former Skyhawks, Bettye Giles and Summitt, mean to UT Martin and the totality of women's sports.

"I thought it was a great atmosphere, a great chance to honor Pat and Miss Betty. I don't think that anybody in here realizes what Betty Giles means to women's sports, women's basketball. The ties that she has to Tennessee and Martin. She's the reason that Title IX went in Tennessee. The fact that she was here today at 96 years old was extremely special and you know, I tell her all the time, win or lose, I just want you to be happy with how hard these kids play," McMillan said. "This is what Miss Betty and Pat would have wanted to see out here in a women's basketball game between Tennessee and Tennessee Martin. I mean, forget the game, forget the score, just look at the atmosphere, the crowd. That's what they envisioned when they started doing this stuff."

Summitt was a former UT Martin player and Tennessee coach who massively impacted women's basketball and athletics as a whole. She played at UT Martin from 1970 to 1974 and coached at Tennessee from 1974 to 2012. The event served



Bettye Giles and teammates of Pat Summitt pregame at the Pat Summitt Heritage Classic in the Tom and Cathleen Elam Center on Nov. 9, 2025 (UTM Athletics)

as a tribute to Summitt's playing and coaching career, and has continued after Summitt died in June 2016.

When Summitt took over as the head coach for the Tennessee women's basketball team in 1974, the United States had just then started to "respect" women's sports. On June 23, 1972, the famous Title IX law was passed. Title IX states that no person, no matter the sex, will be excluded from participation or denied benefits from any educational program or activity that receives federal financial assistance.

Women's basketball at the time was played in high schools, was only half-court and only included six players—three versus three. Summitt knew something needed to change. Though she was just a year older than some of her players at 22 years old, Summitt took the bull by the horns and did everything she could to help her team, including everything from

driving the team's bus, washing their uniforms, feeding her players, making donations and much more. Summitt set a new standard for women's basketball with how much she won so early on and how she trained her players in scrimmages against the men's team.

In the 1997-98 season, Tennessee visited UT Martin for the first time. Summitt was honored by UT Martin with a street name, Pat Head Summitt Drive, and the court on which UT Martin still plays today, Pat Summitt Court. In that 1997-98 season, Tennessee would finish the regular season 30-0 and the postseason 9-0, which marked the team's third straight women's basketball NCAA national championship title.

Summitt was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease in 2011 and later died in 2016. Her legacy is and will forever be felt by women's

athletics.

Summitt was not the only woman honored at the Pat Summitt Heritage Classic 2025 though, former UT Martin athletic director Bettye Giles was also honored. Giles is the only woman to ever serve as UT Martin's athletic director, serving from 1969 to 1995.

Giles first came to UT Martin in 1952 as a physical education teacher. Having always had an interest in sports, she played on multiple intramural sports teams in grade school and at Austin Peay; at the time, both places had no women's athletics other than intramural sports. Giles—like Summitt—knew there needed to be a change.

Giles instated the first women's sport at UT Martin: tennis. She was the team's head coach from 1952 to 1960. Meanwhile, she was also the cheerleading sponsor from 1952 to 1973. She was not done just yet, though.

In 1969, Giles co-founded the Tennessee College Women's Sports Federation. Giles would serve as the Federation's first president. It would later be renamed to the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women—which was then disbanded in 1983 due to a lost antitrust lawsuit. All that said, the impact the TCWSF or AIAW had on Title IX and its development can not be overstated. As a major part of UT Martin's history, the college's softball field is named after her, Bettye Giles Softball Field.